

# The PREVENTION CONNECTION

## NEWSLETTER

## Youth Services Division: A Reentry Overview

—Steve Gibson and Karen Duncan

**A**ccording to the Montana Department of Corrections Youth Services Division (YSD), the reentry process begins during intake, at the moment a youth is committed to a correctional facility. It continues throughout confinement, community parole supervision, discharge planning and, ultimately, transition to adulthood.

At the end of Fiscal Year 2008, the five-year overall average felony recidivism rate was 11.6 percent at Pine Hills Youth Correctional Facility and 12.34 percent at Riverside Youth Correctional Facility. For reentry target populations alone, the felony recidivism rate was 5.83 percent for fiscal year 2006, 7.03 percent for fiscal year 2007, and 6.44 percent for fiscal year 2008.

Many services must be coordinated to achieve these results. Correctional facilities provide access to a range of services that may include counseling, academic education, life skills preparation, chemical dependency treatment, sex offender treatment, community service and restitution

payments, health services and faith-based opportunities. Mentoring can also begin while youth are in the facilities. Institutional case managers and parole officers build case plans based on an assessment completed with validated assessment instruments.

To fulfill the needs for pro-social connections within the community, the YSD contracts for community-based mentoring services, faith and health related services,

and guide homes for youth who wouldn't otherwise have appropriate community living arrangements. Guide home parents are licensed foster care providers specifically trained to provide stable

homes and guidance for youth who are under the supervision of the Department of Corrections. Faith- and health-related services are provided by ordained pastors and Parish Nurses who can offer health expertise while facilitating connections to faith communities for those youth who express this desire.

*Juvenile Reentry Aftercare Coordinators* work as liaisons between youth correctional facilities, juvenile parole and

community providers. Aftercare Coordinators help synchronize educational and employment services and serve as part of the community reentry teams in fulfilling the need for positive connections. Teams also include all community entities that have been identified as necessary to meeting a specific youth's needs. This could include family members, the faith community, Guide Home parents or providers from other placements or services. Reentry team members communicate during community placement and work together to address

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### **Three basic components to helping adjudicated youth achieve success in reentry:**

- 1. Developing positive personal connections within the community;**
- 2. Appropriate home living opportunities; and**
- 3. Employment or school.**

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In mid-November, along with a team of 10 other Montanans, I had the opportunity to participate in *Methamphetamine: The National Summit to Promote Public Health, Partnerships and Safety for Critically Affected Populations*. The summit focused on methamphetamine in context with women, persons who are justice involved, and those who are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered.

Meth is a stubborn drug. We are seeing decline in use, but the devastation of family and community left in its wake cuts wide and deep. It is expensive in ways that we are only beginning to understand. The link with HIV/AIDS and methamphetamine is also metamorphosing: HIV/AIDS is now spreading primarily through heterosexual sex. This vastly expands the need for public education.

The National Summit addressed six domains within each critical population: criminal justice; HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases; mental health services; prevention/public awareness; rural implications; and treatment/aftercare/recovery management support. The four major areas of focus were around data collection and research, cultural competency, substance abuse services and barriers to access and best practices. Throughout the summit, common themes across the critical populations were discussed as were commonalities and differences.

A few discussion points really resonated with me. Because our state is so vast, we need to really think about the most effective way to use our resources. This could mean being more creative with technology to increase access to services and treatment. The team spent some time talking about the coping skills needed to deal with life's highs and lows and noted that learning to take personal responsibility no longer seems to be an automatic rite of passage. As we build, we need to give thought to how we can instill strong coping skills and a sense of personal responsibility. I came away from the Summit with a feeling of genuine hope that the continuum of care and all its pieces are valued by our federal partners and that they are willing to listen.

My greatest personal challenge was to remain focused on primary prevention because so much of the conversation took place around intervention. Though intervention is critical, substance use/abuse rarely, if ever, starts with meth. It starts with favorable parental and community attitudes toward alcohol, tobacco and marijuana use. It starts with deep roots in the human feelings of isolation, hopelessness, lack of support and hope. And it begins slowly, with a cigarette here, a drink there, a prescription medication from a jar in the cabinet . . . marijuana. Use, abuse and addiction are progressive points on the continuum, and at the early stages, use can look innocuous. But to stop the epidemic in its tracks, we need to reach deep and starve the roots.

This issue of the *Prevention Connection* looks at another common outgrowth of the same roots—at youth justice issues. Throughout this issue, there is information on the youth justice system in Montana, about the children left behind when parents are incarcerated. There is discussion about some of the hopeful steps communities are taking through restorative justice and youth drug or treatment courts. Prevention is a science-based practice, and it works. We have the data to prove it.

*Vicki*

*The 2008 PNA data is out—take a look (go to [www.prevention.mt.gov](http://www.prevention.mt.gov) and click on Data and Statistics). Meth usage rates are slowly declining. That's encouraging. But also take a look at the risk factors inherent in community and family domains and you'll see that we still have work to do.*

## Youth Services Division

*Continued from cover*

small problems before they become crises that require return to secure correctional facilities.

Aftercare coordinators encourage family members to visit children in the correctional facilities in person or via video conferencing and may arrange for family member involvement in pre-placement visits and ongoing community team meetings. Where there is financial need, some assistance is available for lodging, travel and meals to support family visits to correctional facilities in conjunction with reintegration meetings.

*Youth Transition Centers* focus on providing intervention for youth who have had difficulty in other community placements. They provide an alternative to returning to a secure correctional environment and have improved the success rate of youth in the community. Some of the augmented services provided include mentoring, tutoring, chemical dependency counseling, faith and health related services, school support, community service opportunities, jobs and incentive outings.

The Montana Department of Corrections Youth Services Division (YSD) began focusing on reentry services in 2003 with support from grant funding. Although that funding ended in 2006, the State Legislature, in its latest session, provided restricted state general funding that allows continued reentry services for youth. The assurance of continuation is augmented by staff training in evidence-based approaches to successful reentry.

Assessment tools include the *Youth Level of Services/Case Management Inventory* (YLS/CMI), which helps define case plans. All case managers and parole officers have been trained to administer the tool and staff can provide ongoing training on the assessment tool. This tool is administered to youth during the correctional facility intake process, when youth are released to the supervision of parole, and at three-month intervals while youth are on parole. Institutional case managers and parole officers have also been trained to administer the *Trauma Symptom Checklist for Children*. Institutional case managers complete the checklist for all youth entering correctional facilities. This information helps ensure creation of appropriate case plans and treatment approaches.

Periodic training is also offered on suicide prevention and supervising offenders with mental health issues.

YSD uses motivational interviewing, cognitive behavioral therapy, and cultural and gender responsive approaches. All Institutional Case Managers, Juvenile Parole Officers and most Youth Correctional Officers have been trained in motivational interviewing, as have many support staff members. The primary curriculum used, *Effective Communication /Motivating Offenders to Change*, was developed by Ray Ferns. All Institutional Case Managers and Juvenile Parole Officers have also been trained in cognitive behavioral therapy and use the *Pathways to Self Discovery and Change* curriculum.

*Girls' Circle* is used to enhance the female gender responsive approach. This promising practices approach has been provided to staff members from the Riverside Youth Correctional Facility for females, Juvenile Parole Officers, Youth Transition Center employees and contractors in the training.

There are twelve American Indian tribes recognized in Montana on seven reservations. This population comprises about seven per cent of the state's population. Historically, American Indians have been disproportionately represented among the youth correctional population, ranging between 18–35 percent, not including federal prosecutions. The American Indian cultural component to our services was recognized in January 2008 as one of seven in the nation highlighted on the OJJDP website as model programs in relationship to disproportionate minority contact.

The YSD American Indian focus began with providing periodic visits from spiritual leaders and sweat lodge ceremonies. Efforts have been enhanced through *White Bison Medicine Wheel Treatment* for youth at both correctional facilities. The White Bison training videos currently feature Montana's youth correctional facilities. White Bison incorporates chemical dependency treatment, sobriety sweats and talking circles.

White Bison, Incorporated brought the Sacred Hoop to both youth correctional facilities during their 12-day journey through Montana. Additionally, both correctional facilities are involved in Montana's Indian Education for All curricula and incorporate ongoing staff training in cultural approaches. A number of staff members have

been trained in the *Medicine Wheel and 12 Steps for Men*, the *Medicine Wheel and 12 Steps for Women*, *Daughters of Tradition* and *Sons of Tradition*. Youth who have been involved in these curricula often report a renewed sense of connection with their families and heritage.

The Youth Services Division continues in its dedication to public safety and trust from the time of commitment through discharge. The ultimate goal? Affording youth the opportunities needed to live successful and productive lives.

—Steve Gibson is the Director of the Youth Services Division of the Montana Department of Corrections. He can be reached at 406.444.0851. Karen Duncan is the Chief of the Youth Community Corrections Bureau. She can be reached at 406.444.4390.

**Mission:** *The Youth Services Division is dedicated to public safety and trust by holding juvenile offenders accountable for their actions through custody, supervision, restitution, and life skills development with the provision of habilitation services from the time of commitment through community transition and discharge while affording youth the opportunities needed to live successful and productive lives.*

# A Short History of Juvenile Justice in Montana

—Allan Davis

— . . . in a world overrun with people and their impacts, it is immensely important that there is still a place like Montana.

—Norma Tirrell

## JJDP Act

*The federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974 as Amended in 2002 (JJDP Act), provides four core requirements that states must meet in order to access funding for prevention and intervention in juvenile delinquency.*

1. Remove juvenile status offenders and non-offenders from secure custody, also known as the deinstitutionalization of status offenders;
2. Remove juvenile delinquent offenders from adult jails and lockups;
3. Provide sight and sound separation of juvenile offenders from adult offenders; and
4. Assess, address, evaluate, and monitor disproportionate minority contact within the juvenile justice system.

*The JJDP Act was based on research that showed that youth who commit status offenses and non-offenders (e.g., wards of the court) placed in secure detention with criminal or delinquent offenders are not deterred from crime. Rather, they are mentored in becoming better criminal or delinquent offenders. Youth placed in adult facilities are also more likely to be abused by adult offenders. Finally, youth kept sight and sound separate from adult offenders in adult facilities for long periods were at high suicide risk.*

*The Annie E. Casey Program, in their efforts to effect juvenile detention reform found that a by-product of their detention reform in some facilities was a reduction in the disproportional representation of minorities in juvenile detention. A primary reason was the requirement to select and use a risk assessment tool evaluated to be free of gender and cultural biases.*

**M**ontanans reside in the wide open spaces. The fourth largest state in the country, Montana encompasses some 150,000 square miles (96 million acres) and averages 600 miles from east to west, with 300 miles between its northern and southern borders. The population of almost one million residents has remained relatively constant throughout the past forty years. The sparse population scattered over a massive area means that Montanans must look statewide for services that many Americans can find in a neighborhood.

*From statehood until the early 1950s, the child welfare system included juvenile justice and belonged to the Montana Humane Society. Children's issues were considered on par with those of cats, dogs and horses. Two juvenile reform schools were located on either side of the state—a 70-bed Girls Vocational School in Helena and a 100-bed Boys Industrial School at Miles City. Both provided containment for youth between the ages of 8 and 21 years whose behavior was creating turmoil in their home communities. An absence of guidelines to determine appropriate commitments meant that the institutions housed youth whose infractions ranged from skipping school to multiple homicides. The institutions operated independently with a direct line of authority from the Governor's Office. Except in Montana's largest communities, juvenile probation functions were a responsibility of law enforcement.*

*In the early 1960s, the legislature created the Montana Department of Institutions, with Edwin Kellner as its first director. District Judges had begun recognizing the value of having individuals dedicated to juvenile justice activities and began appointing juvenile probation officers assigned to judicial districts. By the end of the decade, 18 of Montana's judicial districts had full-time juvenile probation officers. Even so, no forum existed that would allow promotion of statewide concerns related to juvenile justice issues.*

In 1966, a small group of juvenile probation officers and corrections administrators gathered, including Chief Probation Officers from Great Falls, Billings, Missoula, Havre, Bozeman and Butte. The superintendents from the two juvenile training schools were in attendance as well as representatives from the newly created Montana Department of Institutions. The result was the formation of the Montana Probation Officers' Association and the beginning of a major effort to coordinate the manner in which juvenile offenders were handled in Montana. The organization has evolved from its 10 founding members to an organization of several hundred today.

*The 1970s brought about multiple challenges in the juvenile justice arena. The proliferation of substance abuse, gun-related crimes and juvenile gang activity caused a major increase in juvenile crime at national and state levels. Caseloads of youth probation workers were almost unmanageable and the populations of the two correctional facilities more than doubled. Serious incidents at the community level and at the institutions brought juvenile issues to public attention. The Montana Probation Officers Association, the Montana Board of Crime Control, and the Montana Legislature began focusing on juvenile crime and began the process of creating effective responses. National attention to juvenile crime led to enactment of the Juvenile Justice Act of 1974, and for the first time, stakeholders began examining data and mandating a response to the needs of juvenile offenders. Compliance was tied to federal funding offered to states for system improvements.*

*The 1980s saw the steady increase of juvenile crime and rising frustration among the judicial branch, juvenile probation and corrections professionals. Montana began codifying the direction for handling juvenile offenders. This was an enormous task requiring the contributions of district*

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## History . . . Juvenile Justice

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judges, juvenile probation officers, the juvenile corrections component, prosecutors, law enforcement officers and the legislative body. Assisting in the mission was the Board of Crime Control's Youth Justice Council, the Montana Judges' Association, the Montana Corrections Association, Montana Sheriff and Peace Officers Association and key legislators. The result was the Montana Youth Court Act, which, for the first time, offered consistent direction to all components of the juvenile justice system. Although a blueprint was now available, the lack of resources allowing statutory compliance became a major concern. The Federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and the Montana Board of Crime Control began to make effort to fill those gaps.

In 1986, a commission was appointed to study children and family services as well as the youth justice system. On July 1, 1987, the Department of Family Services was formed. With the exception of youth probation, all youth corrections were considered separate from adult corrections. The intent was to provide a fresh perspective to reactions about juvenile crime and resultant programs. The hope was that this change would allow juvenile corrections to gain its own identity outside the highly visible and more sensational adult criminal justice system.

In the early 1990s Montana again reorganized state government, moving juvenile corrections from the Department of Family Services back to the Department of Corrections. Juvenile Probation, the major component of the overall juvenile justice system, continued to work for the District Youth Courts until the early 2000s, at which point they were statutorily assumed by the State of Montana and attached to the Office of the Supreme Court Administrator. In 2005, the Montana Department of Corrections initiated a reorganization that included a juvenile corrections component.

Throughout the past 15 years, amid all the organizational turmoil, youth court, juvenile corrections and law enforcement have made significant gains toward a juvenile justice system responsive to Montana's needs. In order to succeed, all systems have had to focus on seven factors; standardization; collaboration; creativity; role clarification; training; funding; and the development of community options. Placement committees were formed to examine the disposition of offenders, secure placement guidelines, interdisciplinary committees, upgrade of juvenile correctional facilities, and continual creativity on the part of youth probation to develop alternative options for offending youth.

Montana continues to struggle with juvenile justice issues. The periodic change of leadership at all levels can compromise system sustainability. Environmental factors such as unemployment, population increases/shifts, changes in the economy and public tolerance all contribute to the struggle for appropriate response. Even so, improved data collection, research and technology are working together to bring the juvenile justice system to maturity, and Montana's planning and implementation of effective programming are coming to fruition through best practice programming.

—Allan Davis devoted 40 years to working in the juvenile justice arena, with an emphasis on juvenile corrections. He is currently working as a contractor on behavioral health and juvenile justice related issues. For more information, contact [allandavis@bresnan.net](mailto:allandavis@bresnan.net) or see the Montana Board of Crime Control website at [www.mbcc.mt.gov](http://www.mbcc.mt.gov).

***"... to carry anything to an end worth reaching . . . you must be willing to commit yourself to a course, perhaps a long and hard one, without being able to foresee exactly where you will come out."***

**—Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr.**

## The MBCC: One of Montana's Most Valuable Resources

The Montana Board of Crime Control ([www.MBCC.mt.gov](http://www.MBCC.mt.gov)) is a primary criminal and juvenile justice planner for Montana. It raises and administers millions of dollars dedicated to fighting crime, to prevention and to ensuring public safety. The Board is comprised of a wide cross-section of stakeholders appointed to provide leadership, oversight and accountability for the systems charged with promoting justice and public safety.

The MBCC provides numerous resources:

- **Interactive Historical Crime Data:** This historical database allows selection by type of crime and by county or agency. It includes crimes reported to law enforcement agencies starting in 1994, and is current through 2007. [mbcc.mt.gov/Data/crime/crime.htm](http://mbcc.mt.gov/Data/crime/crime.htm)
- **Interactive Historical Juvenile Crime Data:** A database of referrals reported by Montana's juvenile probation officers. This database allows selection by crime category, race, gender, and county. Data is available starting with 1999. [mbcc.mt.gov/juvenilequery/juv\\_get\\_inputs.aspx](http://mbcc.mt.gov/juvenilequery/juv_get_inputs.aspx)
- **MBCC publications are available online, including an annual Crime in Montana report.** [mbcc.mt.gov/Data/publications/pubs.asp](http://mbcc.mt.gov/Data/publications/pubs.asp)
- **The MBCC provides a variety of grants to organizations throughout the state. The grants schedule and a variety of other online resources are available online at** [mbcc.mt.gov/Grants/Grants.asp](http://mbcc.mt.gov/Grants/Grants.asp).
- **The MBCC kicked off its statewide crime prevention initiative with its first Montana Crime Prevention Conference in October 2007. A third annual conference is in the works for 2009. Check out** [mbcc.mt.gov/PlanProj/PlanProj.asp](http://mbcc.mt.gov/PlanProj/PlanProj.asp)

# Rocket Science or Reason: Interrupting the Path to Juvenile Delinquency

—Janet Meissner

**C**ascade County's juvenile justice response continuum is guided by the philosophy that reason and good common sense, coupled with application of science and jurisprudence, produce a synergistic juvenile justice response continuum. Common sense dictates that:

- 1) precursors (referred to in science as risk and protective factors) exist in the lives of kids before, during and after they come into contact with the juvenile justice system;
- 2) these precursors do not exist in a vacuum—they are present in the community, school, family, peer group and within the young person; and
- 3) the court is a powerful intervention tool.

Cascade County implements a three-pronged, common sense approach to interrupting the path to juvenile delinquency. The prongs address before (prevention), during (intervention) and after (treatment). This approach is founded in science and tailored upon objective file reviews of juvenile delinquents and an extensive review of the literature to identify effective practices for populations with characteristics exhibited by the juveniles in Cascade County's justice system. The third layer of review examined the presence of local programs (prevention, intervention and treatment) already in place that could help address the identified population characteristics.

Not unlike the beacon of light held by Lady Liberty, Cascade County's prevention arm provides a beacon to attract youth who are at risk of losing their way to healthy, productive adult lives. Though prevention science identifies late elementary and middle school as opportune times for prevention, the Cascade County team recognized that there were no effective prevention programs in place for children in the late elementary and middle school developmental periods. In response, the team implemented Social Responsibility Training (SRT®), marketed by Character Development Systems. SRT® is a school- and community-based prevention program designed to teach high-risk students, parents, and families about decision and life skills. This systematic class incorporates processes that enhance responsibility and behavioral growth in a progressive fashion. Classes are open ended, so students, parents or families can enter at any time. Participants support and help one another regardless of the reason for referral. Leadership opportunities and mentor training are available to youth and parents who have completed the program. SRT® encourages community and systems coordination in support of generating youth and family success. Youth successfully completing this program have consistently demonstrated school improvements (grades, attendance, and behavioral), an increased presence of the 40 developmental assets and abstinence from criminal behavior and substance abuse.

The second tier of Cascade County's juvenile justice response hinges upon research demonstrating that intervention is most effective when timed to coincide with an emotionally charged, or traumatic, time. Focus group interviews indicated that be-

ing arrested and ordered to submit to the supervision of juvenile probation (Youth Court Services) were perceived by the majority of youth as emotional or traumatic events. Moral Reconnection Therapy (MRT®), marketed by Correction Counseling Inc., was embraced locally as an effective intervention tool. MRT® is an objective, systematic treatment system designed to enhance ego, social, moral, and positive behavioral growth in a progressive, step by step fashion. MRT® has 12 to 16 steps, depending on the treatment population. Briefly, MRT® seeks to move clients from hedonistic (pleasure versus pain) reasoning levels to levels where concern for social rules and others become important. Research on MRT® has shown that as clients pass steps, moral reasoning actually increases among juvenile offenders as well as adult drug and alcohol offenders. MRT® focuses on seven basic treatment issues: confrontation of beliefs, attitudes and behaviors; assessment of current relationships; reinforcement of positive behavior and habits; positive identity formation; enhancement of self-concept; decrease in hedonism and development of frustration tolerance; and development of higher stages of moral reasoning. Youth who successfully complete this process exhibit reduced criminality and substance abuse behaviors.

The final dilemma faced by the Cascade County team was how to best respond to repeat juvenile offenders and treat deeply engrained criminal behaviors. The Juvenile

Drug Court (JDC) is a unique, community-based approach based on the

premises of therapeutic jurisprudence. In this framework, the law is viewed as a therapeutic agent and positive therapeutic outcomes become important judicial goals. The design and operation of the courts can influence therapeutic outcomes.

JDC builds strong community partnerships and enhances the capacity of these partners to assist in the habilitation of substance-abusing youth. The Juvenile Drug Court provides immediate intervention, treatment, and structure in the lives of juveniles who use drugs through ongoing, active oversight and monitoring. This is

**Research demonstrates that intervention is most effective when timed to coincide with an emotionally charged, or traumatic, time.**

## Rocket Science or Reason

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provided by the drug court judge and a multi-disciplinary JDC Team. Juvenile Drug Court provides intensive judicial intervention and supervision of juveniles and families involved in substance abuse—a level of intervention not generally available through the traditional juvenile court process. JDC (locally and nationally) has proven to: address problems that may contribute to use of drugs, and develop/strengthen ability to lead crime- and drug-free lives; develop skills that aid in leading productive substance-free and crime-free lives; strengthen families by improving capability to provide structure and

guidance; and promote accountability of both juvenile offenders *and* those who provide services to them.

Rocket science enabled a man to walk on the moon, but reason enables juveniles to walk free, as healthy, productive citizens in our communities. Application of your own reason and common sense to juvenile justice is a small step for man and a giant leap for mankind.

—Janet Meissner, MS, CHES, is the Executive Director of Alliance for Youth, Inc. in Great Falls. Alliance for Youth works to advance positive youth development. Alliance for Youth can be reached at 406.268.6780.

—Believe nothing . . . unless it agrees with your own reason and your own common sense.

—Buddha

## Notes from the Edge: My Village

—Margie Roberts

**A**s parents, when a child is born, we see their innocence. That child is perfect in every way in our eyes. We hope to be the best parents possible and hope our child will grow up healthy and happy, that life will be perfect.

I assumed these things. I was a single parent. My world revolves around my children and I spent every free moment with them. I didn't drink or do drugs—nor would you ever find me at the local bar on any given night. I was hoping to teach my kids by example. I thought by being a positive role model, we wouldn't have problems.

I was devastatingly wrong. My youngest child, Levi, began to exhibit problems in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade. He was being disruptive in class, fighting, refusing to follow rules and he spent more time in the office than in class. I hoped this was just a phase and that over the summer these issues would dissipate. Instead, as his new school year began, the problems only began to escalate. He was once again failing in all his classes, refusing to do his work and being disruptive. When he was in school, he was in the office or in-school suspension. Most commonly, he was just kicked out. Levi was starting to come home high and he was drinking when the opportunity presented.

Levi's behaviors and problems weren't just his: they were affecting the entire family. He was going downhill fast and he was taking us with him. Levi didn't care what anyone had to say. He had no fear and was going to do what he wanted to do . . . nothing was going to stop him. Well, at least that is what he thought—and I almost believed him. Then Levi got himself into a fight at school and found himself on probation. After failing three urinalyses, we were informed that there was a new program—Drug Court—and told that Levi was a perfect candidate. Having lost all control of my child, I was excited (not to mention relieved) to hear there was a program that would help me regain the control I had lost along the way.

They say it takes a village to raise a child and Drug Court was my village. The program has such structure to it that youth with the desire to change won't fail. The Drug Courts are there to empower youth and to give them the strength to stand during their weakest moments. They help the youth look deep within to find the wonderful qualities that we, as parents, know

they each possess. They teach of choice and accountability, but they do it with love and compassion. They see the good and the possibilities in each youth and build on them.

It took us a year to get through with very little time to spare. This is not an easy program, but it well worth it. After all the hard work, I have gotten back the greatest gift of all: my son. He is now not only drug free, but also an honor roll student. We couldn't have made it this far without the Drug Court. Levi is someone who has dreams and goals and expectations that he knows he will meet. And it's all because amidst our problems there were wonderful people in my community who chose to make a difference in a child's life.

It took this village to make my child what he is and to help him toward what he will become in the future. They were there for us every step of the way and for this I am forever and truly grateful.

# Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative

—Joy A. Mariska

**M**ontana is making significant progress in improving our juvenile justice system. Specifically, planning is underway to reduce over-reliance on juvenile detention, ensure appropriate accountability for youthful offenders while ensuring public safety. The Youth Justice Council, the State Advisory Group for juvenile justice under the auspices of the Montana Board of Crime Control, is providing funding and leadership in this effort. The Annie E. Casey Foundation (AECF) is providing some additional funding and technical assistance through their nationwide Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI).

Missoula, Great Falls, Havre and, more recently, Billings, are Montana's JDAI pilot sites. Each community has a diverse cultural population that is important in addressing racial disparities that exist in the juvenile justice system throughout our state. Missoula, Great Falls, and Billings were selected for their significant populations and potential for regional resource and program development. Havre is important because of its relatively small population and rural nature.

Billings is a recent and important addition to the statewide project because of its Yellowstone County Youth Intake and Assessment Center. Court Services in Billings worked with the National Center for Juvenile Justice in developing a Risk Assessment Instrument (RAI) for youth placed in detention. The RAI assigns points based on the current offense and the youth's history in the system. Based upon risk level, total points reflect which youth should be detained and who can be released or placed in a less restrictive alternative. The RAI has been used successfully in Yellowstone County for several years. Because the existing RAI utilizes well established risk-based elements, it provides a good starting point for developing a single tool to be used statewide. While the existing RAI may ultimately be modified, it makes sense for purposes of consistency that each jurisdiction use the same risk assessment tool. Through the juvenile justice data collection system (JCATS),

managed by the Supreme Court Administrator's Office, the RAI can be automated and data analyzed on an aggregate basis.

The initial steps in JDAI involve engaging and providing training for community stakeholders, establishing a work plan with a specific timeline, and developing data collection processes. Training on JDAI objectives and principles for policy makers, law enforcement, Youth Court judges and staff, prosecutors and defense attorneys, service providers and other stakeholders is essential to the success of the initiative. Another key element is data collection. AECF provides technical assistance to JDAI pilot sites to ensure that specific data is collected. This data is used to identify how detention is used in each jurisdiction and to track how usage changes over time. Early in the process, individual sites will identify areas of practice deemed problematic and amenable to change. Addressing these areas as soon as possible provides opportunities for early and measurable success and aids in building momentum for overall system reform.

Through this project, new programs will be developed as alternatives to detention. As that occurs, it will be tempting to place troubled youth in these programs even though some may not be high-risk. This kind of "net-widening" is problematic as it results in mixing lower-risk youth with higher-risk youth, which in turn can lead to increased recidivism. It also complicates evaluating effectiveness of the various programs. Montana's JDAI pilot sites will be paying special attention to ensure that only youth who would otherwise be in secure detention are referred to services intended as alternatives to detention.

This important issue reflects the value of communities and service providers working to establish a full continuum of community-based services and programs for at-risk youth and juvenile offenders. This continuum is key in establishing an effective juvenile justice system and reflects the importance of services provided at all levels in communities around the state. Services are necessary to address

## Core JDAI Strategies:

- Collaboration
- Data-driven decisions
- Objective admissions screening
- Alternatives to secure detention
- Case processing reform
- Addressing special detention cases
- Reducing racial and ethnic disparities
- Improving conditions of confinement

For more information on JDAI go to [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org) and click on either "Major Initiatives" or on "Juvenile Justice" and look for "Juvenile Detention Alternatives."

prevention, intervention, rehabilitation, and (in cases where a youth is removed from the home) community reentry. The various services are all necessary to prevent low-risk youth from entering the formal juvenile justice system, to intervene with moderate risk youth in order to interrupt any developing negative patterns of behavior, and to provide rehabilitation and reentry services for higher-risk youth in the deep end of the continuum. Matching the risk level of each youth with the level of services and security provided in each program is essential in assuring appropriate use of all resources.

The importance of this work cannot be overstated as resources for delinquent youth continue to be stretched and tested

by factors that put all of our youth at risk. If JDAI is fully implemented statewide and its principals consistently followed, it will serve the broader purpose of offering a model for over-all system reform. This model may serve us well in improving our juvenile justice system in a way that everyone, especially our children, will be safer, more secure, and well equipped for future challenges.

—Joy A. Mariska, M.S. retired in 2006 as Director of Court Services in Billings with more than 30 years of service in the criminal justice system in Montana. She continues to serve as Vice-Chair of the Youth Justice Council and as Chair of the YJC Subcommittee on JDAI. She also serves on the Grant Review and Performance Measures Committee.

## Youth Justice Council

**A**n important but little-known resource in Montana is the Youth Justice Council (YJC). The YJC is the State Advisory Group on Juvenile Justice, operating under the umbrella of the Montana Board of Crime Control. Its 17 members are volunteers appointed by the Governor.

Each state is required by the U.S. Department of Justice to have a State Advisory Group if it is to receive federal juvenile justice grant funds. By Executive Order of the Governor, the purpose of the YJC is to submit recommendations related to the State's compliance with the federal requirements of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act. The YJC also participates in developing and updating Montana's annual juvenile justice plan. It reviews and make recommendations on all juvenile justice grant applications submitted to the Board of Crime Control and seeks regular input on juvenile justice issues in order to better coordinate services and to efficiently utilize available resources.

The grants Montana receives through the Montana Board of Crime Control can be an important funding resource for start-up programs in communities statewide. While the Montana Board of Crime Control receives federal funding for many grant programs, the YJC is only involved in juvenile justice grant funds under Title II - Juvenile Delinquency Prevention Block Grant Program, Title V - Incentive Grants

for Local Delinquency Prevention Programs, and Juvenile Accountability Block Grant Program (JABG). Title II and Title V grants operate under the State fiscal year of July 1 through June 30. Requests for Proposals (RFPs) are generally available in early February, with applications due in March. Eligible recipients are governmental or non-profit organizations. JABG grants operate under the Federal fiscal year of October 1 through September 30. Generally, RFPs are available in early May with applications due in June. Because of their specific goals, JABG grants are available only to government entities, although by nature of the grant requirements, there is often a collaborative component that also involves local service providers.

While funding from the federal government has diminished dramatically, Montana still continues to receive sufficient amounts to help many programs every year. Programs can receive funding through the various grants for 3 or 4 year terms. Continuation grants are given priority for the funding available as long as they meet basic requirements. Adequate funding is also generally available to fund new programs based upon YJC priorities as existing programs reach the end of the funding terms.

For more information on the Youth Justice Council or the Montana Board of Crime Control, or the grant programs they provide, please go to the website at [mbcc.mt.gov](http://mbcc.mt.gov).

## Recidivism Risk Factors

A study of parole violators conducted by Pennsylvania Department of Corrections found a number of criminogenic factors related to failure and increased recidivism. A primary contributing factor to relapse was poor stress management. Violators were more likely to:

- Maintain anti-social attitudes
  - Viewed violations as an acceptable option to situation
  - Maintained general lack of empathy
  - Shifted blame or denied responsibility
- Socialize with individuals with criminal backgrounds
- Use alcohol or drugs while on parole

Parole violators were less likely to:

- Be in stable supportive relationships
- Have job stability
- Be satisfied with employment
- To take low end jobs and work up

Other characteristics included:

- Unrealistic expectations about what life would be like outside of prison
- Poor problem-solving or coping skills
- Lack of anticipation of long-term consequences of behavior
- Failure to use helping resources
- Impulsivity
- Feeling a lack of control

[www.cor.state.pa.us/stats/lib/stats/ParoleViolatorStudy.pdf](http://www.cor.state.pa.us/stats/lib/stats/ParoleViolatorStudy.pdf)

# Youth Treatment Court

## The Seventh Judicial District:

- Includes 5 counties, Dawson, McCone, Prairie, Richland and Wibaux
- Covers 9,447 square miles.
- Had a 2002 census population of 22,970 and
- A total youth population of 5,680.

## YTC Team Members:

- Katherine M. Irigoin,  
District Judge
- Serina Everett,  
YTC Coordinator
- Mike Weber,  
Richland County Attorney
- Olivia Norlin,  
Office of Public Defender
- Steven Bailey,  
Chief Youth Court Probation Officer
- Kale Rasmussen,  
Deputy Youth Court Probation Officer
- Tim Anderson,  
Treatment Coordinator
- Diane E. Savage,  
Eastern Montana Mental Health

**I**n October 2006, the Montana Seventh Judicial District Youth Treatment Court (YTC), led by District Judge Katherine Irigoin, took in its first participant. The program would never have started if the Montana Board of Crime Control (MBCC) hadn't sent Irigoin and four other judges to a national conference on juvenile issues. There Irigoin attended presentations highlighting evidence-based practices that included treatment courts. Inspired by national success in reducing recidivism and addressing substance abuse issues, Irigoin started the process of gathering and prioritizing limited resources and garnering community support to create the Youth Treatment Court.

With funding from Richland County, the YTC was set up as a court-managed intensive treatment program for youth age 13 to 18. The four-phase program takes 12 to 18 months to complete and focuses on youth significantly involved in the criminal justice system and who are abusing alcohol and drugs.

By June 2007, YTC was serving five participants and had been awarded a subgrant from the MBCC to fund operating costs. Currently, the YTC is serving six youth. A team consisting of the judge, prosecutor, defense attorney, two youth probation officers, a chemical dependency counselor and a treatment court coordinator together pursue the mission *to reduce juvenile crime and substance abuse by diverting youth to a court-managed treatment program which holds them accountable and emphasizes personal responsibility.*

The tools used by the YTC team include frequent, random drug tests, weekly face-to-face meetings between the YTC Coordinator and the youth, weekly appearances before the judge in the first two phases, and a system of sanctions and incentives applied close in time to triggering behaviors. The YTC team meets at 3:00 p.m. each Monday to staff the participants, based upon weekly reports prepared by the YTC Coordinator. Court sessions are held at 4:00 p.m., using video conferencing that connects courtrooms in Dawson and Richland Counties.

The participants have made great strides. Since the program began, four participants have successfully completed it, one moved out of state, and one was terminated. In addition, four participants obtained GEDs, one graduated from high school, two delivered healthy babies while remaining substance-free, one completed and another is participating in a 15-week parenting class and one is ready to deliver a baby within a few weeks (after remaining substance-free). Those who owed fines or restitution have made payments toward both, and one earned a driver's license.

Participants have also completed the following YTC-required programs:

- (1) a 14-week Writing Workshop intended to encourage self-expression in writing and to improve basic literary skills;
- (2) a six-week Wellness Program to provide current information and education on healthy relationships, peer norms, personal risks, healthy behavior, community resources, communication skills to negotiate or prevent risk-taking behaviors, and development of a personal wellness plan; and
- (3) a 15-week Parenting Class that emphasizes the importance of raising children in a warm, trusting, and caring household.

To increase the number of referrals and better address youth use of alcohol, YTC created a six-month track. The team also visited lower court judges and law enforcement officials in the five counties of the judicial district to provide information about the shorter track and to encourage referrals to YTC. The YTC team has also made presentations to all students, grades 7 through 12, in Richland County and is prepared to make similar presentations to students in the remaining counties. The first graduations from YTC occurred in May 2007. Perhaps best of all, no YTC graduate has recidivated. From here, the YTC team is looking forward to continued success in assisting youth as they address their substance abuse and criminal behavior.

# Those Left Behind: *The Children of Incarcerated Parents*

—Joy A. Mariska

**C**hildren of incarcerated parents are the unidentified victims of their parents' actions. In any given year, more than 2,000 men from Yellowstone County *alone* are imprisoned. Many are fathers. Over the course of a year, the Women's Prison houses at least 250 women who collectively have approximately 400 children. About 20 percent of the children are under age five when their mothers go to prison, and more than half never visit the incarcerated parent.

When fathers go to prison, the majority of children remain with their mothers, who, in most cases, are the primary caregivers. When mothers go to prison, about 60 percent of children go to live with a grandparent. Sadly, 15-20 percent

of the children entering the child welfare system have an incarcerated parent, and the majority of children remaining in foster care over the long-term have incarcerated parents. About 25 percent of the youth outside the system live with nonrelatives, floating from house to house, couch-surfing among friends and acquaintances.

Better methods of identifying these children are needed. While children of incarcerated parents are at high risk for negative behaviors, their lack of visibility to Juvenile Justice and Child Welfare agencies prevents positive interventions. Prisoners are seldom asked about their children's needs. Mothers may lie about their children to avoid agency involvement out of fear of losing custody of their children. These children sometimes come to the attention of the courts when they enter school under the informal care of friends or relatives who lack legal authority.

Two issues stand out: parent-child separation and traumatic stress. As a result of these stressors, children are at increased risk for a gamut of high-risk behaviors, including academic failure, truancy, school drop-out, gang involvement, early pregnancy, drug abuse and delinquency. Other

research indicates that these children may be at risk long before a parent is locked up and that these behaviors get worse as a result of the parent's incarceration.

The Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) reports that children of incarcerated parents experience significant emotional turmoil as a result of the loss, including fear, anxiety, sadness, depression, loneliness, guilt and anger. Parental arrest leads to stress, trauma, stigmatization and separation problems, which are frequently compounded by conditions of poverty, violence, parental substance abuse, abuse and neglect, multiple caregivers and prior separations.

Absent positive intervention, the interconnecting

pattern of childhood trauma, emotional response, reactive behavior, and potential criminal activity can lead

to intergenerational incarceration. Reactive behavior and negative coping patterns often result in criminal activity. For example, reactive withdrawal can result in substance abuse, which leads to drug possession; reactive physical aggression can lead to fighting with peers, which ultimately can lead to assault and arrest.

The *Children of Prisoner's Library* of the *Family and Corrections Network* compiled a list of what the children of incarcerated parents need. That list includes consistent caring adults who understand that children love their parents even when they have committed a crime. Good advisers for these children do not condemn the parent, and yet can understand the emotions felt by the children left behind. They can also offer children the chance to express feelings and learn to cope with

them. Finally, a good adviser can provide positive affiliation with a community and meaning beyond crisis as well as assist the child in maintaining contact with the parent—or explaining why that isn't possible.

In many cases, default caregivers need assistance. Some of their needs include support and understanding from family, friends, clergy and the community. They also need information about the issues affecting the children of incarcerated parents and the services that are available within the community. Guidance on what is best for the child and how to answer questions can also be helpful, as can respite care and help with managing services that are often fragmented, unavailable or costly.

Clearly, positive adults who are aware of the real needs of these children are essential. Consistent, sustained relationships are key to helping a child adjust to a parent's arrest and incarceration. Mentoring programs can fill some of the need. Mentors can provide council, friendship, guidance, instruction and encouragement. They can help the child build strengths, develop or increase competence and confidence. Through the influence of an effective mentor, children can gain academic skills and confidence, which moves them closer to being able to achieve their dreams.

Improved public awareness and training is essential if the impact of the parental incarceration is to be ameliorated. The research on the impact of parental incarceration makes it clear that much is to be gained through better awareness of the issues. Public safety and good conscience demand it.

—Joy A. Mariska, M.S. retired in 2006 as Director of Court Services in Billings with more than 30 years of service in the criminal justice system in Montana. She continues to serve as Vice-Chair of the Youth Justice Council and as Chair of the YJC Subcommittee on JDAI. She also serves on the Grant Review and Performance Measures Committee.

# Juvenile Justice in Montana

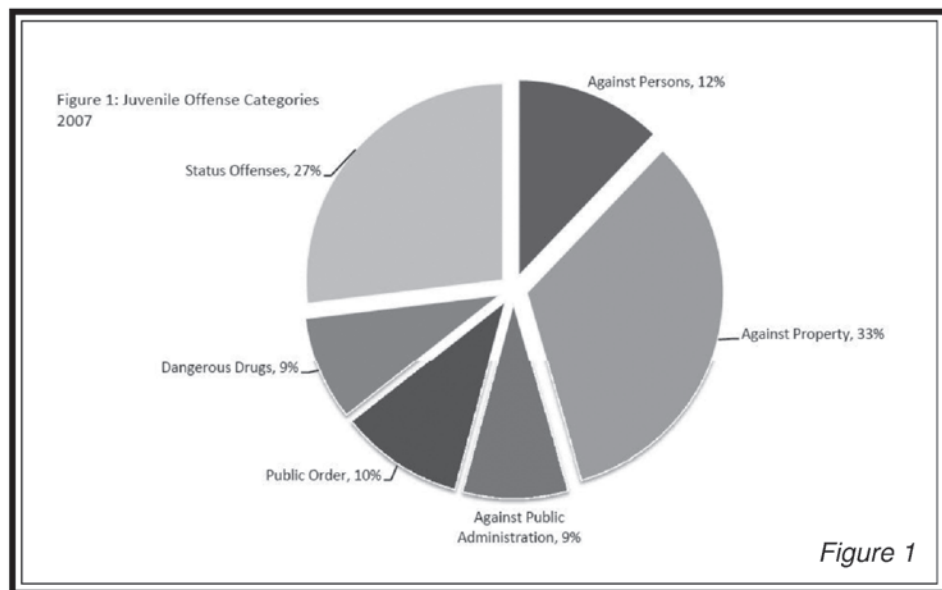
—Thale Dillon and Robert Peake

**I**n 1899, the United States established the world's first court of law dedicated exclusively to children, in Cook County, Illinois, on Chicago's west side. Until then, children were tried in criminal courts alongside adults, and were imprisoned and sentenced to hard labor at ages as young as eight. Together with a sister court in Denver, the Cook County Youth Court devised "an entirely new system of justice based on the principle that children are inherently different from adults, less culpable for their acts and more amenable to rehabilitation." (Annie E. Casey Foundation).

The Juvenile Justice System has come a long way since those days and it may be a surprise to some that Montana is better off than most states in terms of its juvenile justice system. For once, our small size and rural nature work to our advantage, helping us showcase a juvenile justice system that is not as broken as national trends would indicate. Montana's system places a great deal of emphasis on early intervention and prevention . . . and rehabilitation when the first two prove insufficient.

Two features of Montana's juvenile justice system have proven valuable in reducing the number of youth in custody in the state. The first is the mandatory use of an assessment instrument for all youth placed on probation; the second is the use of an advanced *Juvenile Court Assessment Tracking System*.

The former helps identify mental health needs and is used to create customized case plans for each youth, plans in which family members are heavily involved. The latter enables probation officers and district court judges to track

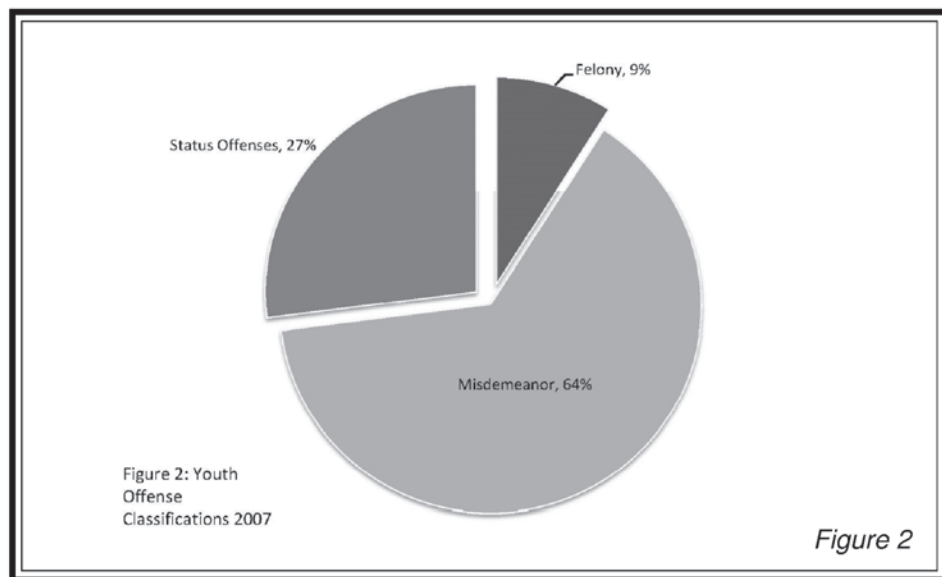


individual youth through the system, paying close attention to trends in offenses, dispositions, placements and services. This allows analysis of the effectiveness of placements and services in terms of reducing recidivism.

In 2007, a total of 13,673 youth offenses were reported statewide. The most common offenses were offenses against property (33%) followed by status offenses (27%), which are matters that are considered offenses only because of a youth's age (e.g., runaway, minor in possession or truancy). See Figure 1.

Youth enter the juvenile justice system through a referral to Youth Court. One

of three dispositions can be handed down: *Informal* (81%), to be handled by a juvenile probation officer; *Formal* (11%), where the youth appears before a Youth Court judge; and *Pending* (8%), where the case is awaiting action from the county attorney's office, requires further investigation by law enforcement, or a ticket has been issued and juvenile probation is waiting to see the youth and parent(s). By far, the most common type of offenses committed by juveniles are misdemeanors, followed by status offenses. Just 9 percent of all youth offenses in 2007 were felonies. See Figure 2.



## Juvenile Justice in Montana

*Continued from Page 12*

The five most frequent offenses associated with referrals to juvenile probation reflect the same general pattern: the majority of offenses are misdemeanors, with theft the most common, followed by disorderly conduct. See Figure 3.

Reductions in the number of out-of-home placements and commitments to the Department of Corrections demonstrate that Montana's program of prevention and early intervention is working. The 1999 legislature approved an expansion of Pine Hills Youth Correctional Facility for Boys in Miles City from 85 beds to 144 beds by fiscal year 2001. Since then, two units have closed; the facility currently has a capacity of 124. At the time of publication, there were 70 boys at Pine Hills and just 12 girls at Riverside Youth Correctional Facility for Girls in Boulder (capacity 20). The funding available for Juvenile Probation has remained fairly constant over the past few years, whereas the amounts returned to districts for prevention and early interventions have increased considerably. The number of youth and the number of intakes throughout the 22 districts has also remained fairly constant over the past three years.

Despite the best efforts involved in designing and implementing youth court programs, there are some issues that Montana's juvenile justice system continues to struggle with. One problem is that juvenile probation has become the default agency for many youth with mental health needs. Parents are often told by other agencies to refer them to probation when they act out, when in fact they should seek mental health treatment for their children. Unfortunately, many do not have the resources to do so.

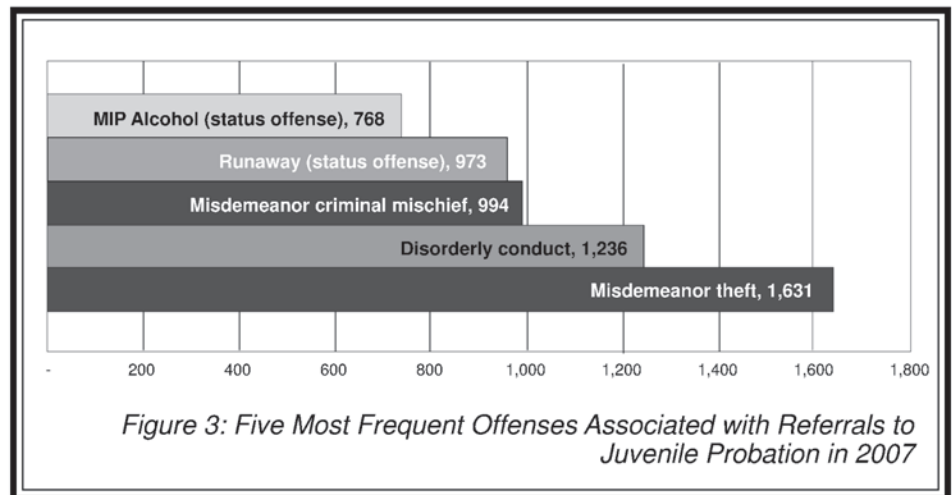
Another problem is the lack of intermediate sanctions in the continuum of care available to youth. Options go from a group home setting to a correctional setting, with nothing between. Programs are needed to address this gap. The system needs to include sanctions that provide lower levels of security than what correctional settings offer, and there needs to be a focus on long-term drug and alcohol treatment, as well as mental health services.

### Sources:

- Thale Dillon is the Director of Economic Research for Montana KIDS COUNT; Robert Peake is the Chief of the Youth Court Services Bureau within the Montana Office of Court Administration.

For more information, see:

- The Annie E. Casey Foundation 2008 KIDS COUNT Data Book. [www.montana.kidscount.org/](http://www.montana.kidscount.org/)
- 2007 Youth Court At-A-Glance by the Office of the Court Administrator. [www.montanacourts.org/dcourt/youth\\_court/Youth%20Court%20Report%20Card%202007.pdf](http://www.montanacourts.org/dcourt/youth_court/Youth%20Court%20Report%20Card%202007.pdf)



### 2007 Factoids

- 768 offenses referred to Juvenile Probation were for Minor In Possession (MIP).
- 1,084 youth were ordered to pay restitution totaling \$682,677; \$358,428 was collected.
- 44 percent of the families of youth referred to the juvenile justice system had incomes below \$20,000
- 39 percent of the families of youth referred to the juvenile justice system had incomes from \$20,000 - \$40,000.
- 2,957 youth were ordered to complete community service totaling 73,500 hours; 55,043 hours were completed.
- Of the 981 youth tested for drugs, 449 tested positive.
- The top three drugs used were Marijuana (96%), Methamphetamine (3%) and Amphetamines (1%).
- 89 percent of the youth referred were not attending school.
- 86 percent of youth did not commit another offense while under Juvenile Justice System supervision.

Source: 2007 Youth Court At-A-Glance by the Office of the Court Administrator. [www.montanacourts.org/dcourt/youth\\_court/Youth%20Court%20Report%20Card%202007.pdf](http://www.montanacourts.org/dcourt/youth_court/Youth%20Court%20Report%20Card%202007.pdf)

# Montana Alliance for Families Touched by Incarceration

—Apyrl Lee

## Broken Bonds: Understanding and Address- ing the Needs of Children with Incarcerated Parents

*The stigma and shame associated with parental incarceration makes identifying children of incarcerated parents difficult for schools and social service agencies.*

*These children are also subject to significant uncertainty and instability, as many incarcerated parents repeatedly cycle in and out of prison. At the same time, the barriers to communication between a child and an incarcerated parent are complicated if caregivers are reluctant to facilitate contact.*

*Broken Bonds offers a better understanding of this population of children through a review of empirical research, the scope of the problem and demographic traits. The report also describes changes that children of incarcerated parents encounter as they negotiate new living arrangements, family relationships and financial circumstances. This is followed by a review of empirical studies, protective factors programs and recommendations for serving this population.*

*This report by the Urban Institute can be accessed online at:*

*<http://www.urban.org/publications/411616.html>*

**S**everal years ago, people across our state began hearing the cries of an invisible group of Montana children left behind by incarcerated parents. In 2006 the *Montana Bill of Rights for Children of Incarcerated Parents Group* (BOR) was formed. This group was comprised of state government and non-profit agencies as well as individuals who saw the need to begin addressing issues faced by the increasing number of Montana children with at least one parent involved in the Criminal Justice System.

In 2008, The Parenting Place of Missoula (a non-profit agency actively involved with the BOR group) received a grant from the Montana Children's Trust Fund to develop a statewide Family Resource Center designed to strengthen families touched by incarceration. The BOR group has expanded its vision and is now operating as *The Montana Alliance for Families Touched by Incarceration* (MAFTI). This group is dedicated to providing support and advocacy to families as they navigate through the Criminal Justice System. In support of the Bill of Rights for Children of Incarcerated Parents, MAFTI is working on a toolkit designed to help adults talk with children about incarceration, to answer their questions and reduce their fears. The toolkit will be available through the Family Resource Center and distributed to professionals and caregivers across the state.

The Family Resource Center is in the process of developing a database of resources, a web site and a warm line to provide information to family members and service providers throughout Montana. Families touched by incarceration face numerous barriers. Our goal is to provide the services and support they need in order to regain their strength.

When children are grieving the loss of a parent, they often find it difficult to focus on anything else. They may struggle in the classroom, at home and with their friends. Children process grief in different ways that can result in behavioral

changes ranging from withdrawal to aggression. MAFTI identifies programs that will offer these children support in the home and at school, as well as opportunities to correspond or visit with their incarcerated parents. All activities are planned with the intent of reducing the impact of separation.

If you would like more information about MAFTI or to become actively involved, contact Apyrl Lee at [apryl@bluebottle.com](mailto:apryl@bluebottle.com).

**Note:** The Parenting Place provides a combination of home-visiting, respite child care, parent education classes and parent/child visits to a highly underserved population of at-risk families currently involved in pre-release or parole programs through the Missoula Correctional Services. The Parenting Place also offers technical assistance to connect with other pre-release centers and prisons in Montana.

For more information about The Parenting Place, contact Teresa Cowan, Executive Director at [Teresa@parentingplace.net](mailto:Teresa@parentingplace.net).

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## Bill of Rights for Children of Incarcerated Parents

*I have the right . . .*

- *to be kept safe and informed at the time of my parent's arrest*
- *to be heard when decisions are made about me.*
- *to be considered when decisions are made about me.*
- *to be well cared for in my parents' absence.*
- *to speak with, see and touch my parent.*
- *to be supported as I face my parent's incarceration.*
- *not to be judged, blamed or labeled because my parent is incarcerated.*
- *to a lifelong relationship with my parent*

# Restorative Justice

—Jen Molloy

**R**estorative Justice is a response to crime that focuses on the *harm* caused by illegal behaviors as versus the typical focus, which evaluates the ways in which behavior violates the law.

The primary tenets of restorative justice are accountability, community safety and competency development. *The Center for Restorative Youth Justice* is a community-based organization dedicated to building safer communities and restoring victim well-being by emphasizing direct accountability among youth who have committed offenses. Center programs include Peer Court, Victim Offender Conferencing, Youth Connections, the Community Accountability Board and the Drug and Alcohol Accountability Panel. All focus, collectively and individually, on upholding this mission and building on the demonstrated success of restorative interventions.

Restorative Justice practices currently implemented in our Kalispell agency respond to crimes that have been committed and to preventing future harmful behavior. Restorative Justice practices have been widely recognized as effective alternatives to retributive approaches. These practices have a demonstrated ability to save money and to empower individuals and communities by giving those most impacted by crime a direct voice in the justice process. Recidivism is reduced and stakeholders, including victims, offenders and the extended community, consistently report higher satisfaction levels with the justice process.

The retributive justice system typically focuses on the offender by holding the individual accountable to the state. Restorative Justice holds the worth and humanity of all stakeholders equal. This redefines the role of state in redressing a crime. From a restorative perspective, the needs of

victims must be identified and addressed. The Center for Restorative Youth Justice attempts to address these needs through victim impact statements, restitution, restorative community service, focus groups, cognitive skill-building groups, and (when ever appropriate and possible) face-to-face encounters between the victim and the offender.

For offenders, practices emphasize accountability, competency-development, inclusion and positive community involvement. The community is called upon to take part in the justice process. A broader prevention perspective is also fulfilled by offering the opportunity for youth to take responsibility for their actions and meaningful, constructive opportunities to participate in community life in positive ways. In turn, the community benefits from an increased sense of safety and connectedness.

Those intimately involved in the juvenile justice system recognize that retributive approaches to combating crime can be

expensive and yet still fall short of effectively reducing crime rates and repairing harm. Restorative justice practices have capacity to address the underlying social conditions that led to crime in the first place. They can also reduce the fiscal

burdens of more punitive approaches. Taking this into consideration, the Center for Restorative Youth Justice continuously works to increase empathy, provide opportunities for internally driven behavioral change, stronger interpersonal relationships and, ultimately, public perceptions of safety, civic responsibility, and general well-being.

—Jen Molloy, MSW, is the Executive Director of the Center for Restorative Youth Justice in Kalispell. She can be reached at 406.257.7400 or [jen@restorativeyouthjustice.org](mailto:jen@restorativeyouthjustice.org).

## The Center for Restorative Youth Justice (CRYJ)

- The CRYJ offers several restorative programs including the Flathead County Peer Court, Victim Offender Conferencing (VOC), Youth Connections—restorative community service, a Community Accountability Board (CAB), and a Drug and Alcohol Accountability Panel.
- The Flathead County Peer Court was established in 1998, the Victim Offender Conferencing (VOC) Program in 2005, Youth Connections in 2006 and, more recently, the Community Accountability Board (CAB), and a Drug and Alcohol Accountability Panel.
- The Flathead County Peer Court has held 234 hearings and served 940 youthful offenders.
- The VOC program has facilitated just under 200 conferences, while reaching out to many more crime victims.
- The Drug and Alcohol Accountability Panel started in August 2008, but has already coordinated discussions around substance abuse and provided opportunities for 15 youth to take accountability for their decisions.

***Balanced and Restorative Justice is not a new set of programs and short-term projects. It is a new way of thinking about crime, community, and working together for the future. Balanced and Restorative Justice requires vision, creativity, and shared leadership on the part of the justice system, victims, offenders and the community.***

—Susan Sharpe

# Thank You for Asking: *Tackling the Blank Page*

—Sheryl Noethe

## Great Juvenile Justice Links

- *The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention includes programs such as: Disproportionate Minority Contact, Gang Reduction, Girls Study, Internet Crimes Against Children, Juvenile Accountability Block Grants, Tribal Youth and more. Go to <http://ojjdp.ncjrs.org/> for a wealth of resources.*
- *The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's Model Programs Guide: [www.dsgonline.com/mpg2.5/mpg\\_index.htm](http://www.dsgonline.com/mpg2.5/mpg_index.htm)*
- *Journal of Knowledge and Best Practices in Juvenile Justice and Psychology: [www.pvamu.edu/Include/College%20of%20Juvenile%20Justice%20and%20Psychology/JJJ11.pdf](http://www.pvamu.edu/Include/College%20of%20Juvenile%20Justice%20and%20Psychology/JJJ11.pdf)*
- *National Criminal Justice Reference System: [www.ncjrs.gov/App/Topics/Topic.aspx?TopicID=122](http://www.ncjrs.gov/App/Topics/Topic.aspx?TopicID=122)*
- *Key studies on Juvenile Detention and Correction Facilities: [www.buildingblocksfor youth.org/issues/ juv-det.html](http://www.buildingblocksfor youth.org/issues/ juv-det.html)*
- *Great data on Montana's corrections system: [www.cor.mt.gov/](http://www.cor.mt.gov/)*
- *The Montana Board of Crime Control: <http://mbcc.mt.gov>*
- *Montana Kids Count: Juvenile Justice in Montana Report: [www.montanakidscount.org/Portals/6/2008%20state%20data%20book/2008%20juvenile%20justice%20article.pdf](http://www.montanakidscount.org/Portals/6/2008%20state%20data%20book/2008%20juvenile%20justice%20article.pdf)*

**E**verywhere young people turn, it seems that someone is telling them what to do: *be quiet . . . behave . . . sit still and get back in line.* At home, in the classroom and in general, youth are ignored in our quest to shape them into citizens. Rarely are they asked about their deepest feelings, longings, fears and hopes, but in nearly thirty years of experience, I have seen time and again what happens when a caring adult asks young people to express themselves creatively and listens when they do.

I direct the *Missoula Writing Collaborative*, a writers-in-residence program serving at-risk populations in Missoula County. I work in the public schools and other venues and in the classroom with 7th and 8th grade students. In teaching, I primarily use contemporary poetry because it provides the freedom of form that encourages students to expand their imaginations and fantasies onto the page.

No one sets out to be a loser, an outsider, a nobody, but youth can be placed in categories based on family finances, wardrobe, appearance or history. When they fall into the hole of low self-esteem and loneliness, it becomes incredibly difficult for them to keep their heads above water.

When asked to offer up their deepest hidden emotions in a piece of writing, students are often recalcitrant and suspicious. But because my program is a full school year long, students come to trust me and to look forward to their weekly classroom poetry workshop. There they can express things normally kept locked away, and get feedback on their strengths and abilities. This bit of success becomes a beacon, pulling students toward more of the activities that resulted in attention and honest praise.

After being rewarded for tackling the pen and blank page, youth begin to redefine themselves as authors, artists and

creative members of society. Many times, children who spend most of their classroom time in detention are placed in the poetry-writing classroom. There they often surprise their peers, their teachers, and themselves with the discovery that they have a voice, that the voice matters, and that they belong squarely at the center of our culture. When ideas are heard and appreciated, the quirky personalities that previously pushed them off to the side become gifts that enrich the classroom and lives.

The verb, *educate*, comes from the Latin meaning, *to bring out*. A classroom writing instructor can bring the background needed to pinpoint a bit of elegance, a sense of humor, vivid use of words and phrases. We honestly respond to student work with the intent of finding what is right, what is good and then by drawing attention to it.

Youth are faced with a myriad of emotions and drives that they do not yet have the capacity and experience to handle. Many of them must deal with intense situations that can drive them to physical violence and rage. A caring adult who listens can help prevent much of the acting out and help the child focus on resolution through creativity and language.

One of my favorite authors, Daniel Goldman, wrote *Emotional IQ*. This work addresses the fact that intelligence is based on several factors, including the social skills needed to negotiate with other people. Emotional intelligence lends the ability to empathize and to use

**Many people consider culture and literature something above and beyond, something they are not a part of, a place they are not welcome without degrees and high marks and, sometimes, a beret and a cape.**

the imagination to explain unsettling behavior in others. Using emotional intelligence allows us to become aware that there are dozens of reasons another person could seem to be on the offense, whether that is illness, miscommunication or confusion. This leads to the understanding that there is no need to respond negatively or with violence, whether verbal or physical. When young people can forgive, accept or ignore what appears to be a slight, an insult or an

## Tackling the Blank Page

*Continued from Page 16*

invitation, they gain balance and understanding. This ability, when coupled with access to feelings and reason, can decrease the aggression that haunts our society.

I teach at a local middle school in Missoula, and I have watched children change negative definitions of themselves into heightened aspirations for their lives. One boy, stopped by a teacher in the hallway for some reason, brought joy to our hearts as he redefined himself as an author, surprising the teacher by proving he was not a delinquent, not a problem, but an *author* on his way up.

On a regular basis I refer students to a counselor when they reveal in their writing that they are cutting themselves, that a step-dad is injuring them, that alcoholism and battering are regular events in their lives . . . as I do when I become aware that they are being bullied, teased unmercifully or are afraid and in danger. Because they have been writing regularly and are comfortable with approaching the blank page, and because they know I'm listening carefully, this is the place where they can safely tell the narrative of their experience without threat of punishment.

Last year a boy wrote a poem about his mother that began, "Vodka is smooth. Champagne is bubbly. Mother is smooth and bubbly as she stumbles in the door." No one at school knew about this boy's private life and pain. I entered his poem in

a national contest, *Do The Write Thing*, but told him he would need his mother's permission to enter the contest. He was terrified, but I encouraged him to show her his poem. Every day I'd ask him, "Have you showed her yet?" and every day he'd reply, "No." Then one day he showed up at school rapturous. Not only had his mother read the poem and signed the consent form, but that very night she went to her first Alcoholics Anonymous Meeting. She told the boy her love for him was so great she would change herself.

This boy won the national award, was published, and went to Washington, D.C. with his mother and a teacher to spend a week in celebration. The poem, along with an article about the boy and his mother, were published again in the Fall *Prevention Connection*.

The upshot? The mother is still sober, and the family was greatly changed.

My life's work demonstrates that prevention through creative self-expression, the attention of trusted adults and personal success can make all the difference.

Thank you for asking . . . and thank you for listening.

—Sheryl Noethe directs the Missoula Writing Collaborative, a writers-in-residence program serving at-risk populations in Missoula County. She works in the public schools and other venues including homeless shelters and residences and detention homes for at-risk teens. She can be reached at [snoethe@montana.com](mailto:snoethe@montana.com).

## McGruff: Taking a Bite Out of Crime

*Students at Broadwater, Radley, and Hawthorn Elementary Schools were surprised to see a familiar face in September. Children crowded around McGruff the Crime Dog, the national symbol of crime prevention. McGruff appeared with a Helena police officer and Montana Board of Crime Control (MBCC) staff, urging kids to "Take a Bite out of Crime" and "Say No to Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drugs." Most of the children shouted questions and touched his trench coat; some pulled on his ears; and a few shy kids silently peeked around their parents, teachers, and friends.*

*During the past 25 years, McGruff has made thousands of appearances at community and school events and on radio and television. His messages have changed from emphasizing personal, family, and home security to broader crime prevention concerns such as bullying, internet safety, and identity theft. McGruff's favorite crime-fighting techniques include teaching safety tips for home and school to children and adults. Although there are no easy solutions, it is clear that collaboration between parents, educators, law enforcement, and crime practitioners is key.*

*The MBCC and the Montana Crime Prevention Council (MCPC) have partnered to bring McGruff and crime prevention back to Montana. For more information on MBCC, MCPC or McGruff, contact the MBCC at 406.444.4947.*



# Mountain Home Montana and Juvenile Justice

—Gypsy Ray

## Results from Mountain Home

*The data show that Mountain Home participants are far better prepared to face the challenges of independent life than they were before they came to the program.*

— 100% delayed the birth of a second child for over one year. *The national average is only 61%.*

— 90% report a high or very high level of knowledge about basic childcare. *Only 43% reported the same level prior to living at Mountain Home.*

— 71% report a very high level of knowledge of child safety, compared to 20% prior to living at Mountain Home.

— 80% report a very high level of knowledge of appropriate expectations for a child, compared to 10% prior to living at Mountain Home.

— 58% moved to independent living from Mountain Home.

— 65% were still living independently after six months.

*Sources: Figures were gathered from the University of Montana Social Work Study, May 2004, and based on figures provided by the Mountain Home Montana Evaluation Report, August 2000 to August 2003.*

Wendy's\* story is pretty typical of those we hear at Mountain Home.

*I'd been on the run for a year when I discovered I was pregnant. And it was the worst news of my life. I was strung out, and living with an abusive drug addict. I was so bruised I couldn't recognize myself, never mind think about some child inside me.*

*Something had to change. I turned my boyfriend in for assault. I went to a runaway shelter, but I didn't last — in two weeks I was arrested. They sent me to a home, and I had my baby there. When she was a month old, I finally got to leave, so I found my own place in Missoula. Things were looking up.*

*But that didn't last either. Completely broke, I was kicked back to the streets. Then I heard about Mountain Home.*

*I can't say I was thrilled to move in with a bunch of people, after being on my own and all. But it turns out there wasn't anything better I could have done. I needed a stable place to raise my girl. And, I needed to learn how to raise her.*

*Now I'm in college, I'm an excellent mom, and despite what I've been through, I have a beautiful, healthy daughter. Mountain Home saved our lives, and taught me how to give my daughter the hope I never knew.*

\*Name changed

**M**ountain Home Montana has been providing a home for homeless teenage mothers and their children since 2000. Referrals come from medical providers, social service agencies, Juvenile Justice System, Child and Family Services, schools, families and youth themselves.

Our work with the Juvenile Justice System is unique. Often we find that youth involved in the Juvenile Justice System who are living at Mountain Home are disconnected from other services. Many are high school dropouts, often living on their own. Teenage pregnancy is just one factor in already complicated, troubled lives. These youth have many risk factors and few protective factors until they enter the Juvenile Justice System. Missoula is lucky to have a Youth Court, Youth Probation and Parole and Community Restorative Justice.

Youth Court Probation Officers often become the one caring adult youth can count on. Although there are many rules and regulations that go along with probation, there is also someone to hold them accountable. Youth Court Probation Officers refer teenage mothers to Mountain Home on a regular basis.

The Department of Corrections Youth Parole Division officers also fill more than a juvenile justice role to the youth in their system. They are trustworthy adults who serve as disciplinarians, mentors and advocates. Probation and Parole Officers make referrals, serve on treatment teams and even come to baby showers and birthdays. Our clients count these officers as some of the most important people in their lives.

We also have a program in Missoula called *Community Restorative Justice*. This non-profit organization works under a restorative justice framework, providing victim-offender

### 2006: Teen Pregnancy in Missoula

— 22 babies were born to mothers between the ages of 15 – 17

— 74 babies were born to mothers between the ages of 18 – 19

— This accounts for 7.8% of all babies born in Missoula in 2006.

<http://www.dphhs.mt.gov/statisticalinformation/vitalstats/2006report/06vitalstats.pdf>

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# Wounded Warriors: *the Forgotten Victims of Domestic Violence*

—Mark Humphrey

**D**omestic violence against men is a largely ignored and forgotten issue, but the consequences result in displacement from homes, separation of families, broken relationships, fatherless children, alcohol and drug abuse, depression and homelessness. Domestic violence against men takes many forms. Some are subtle, all are painful. Some of the men affected by this trend have experienced problems elsewhere and are arriving in Big Horn County emotionally scarred, resources depleted, sometimes physically wounded. Following are three scenarios describing real-life battery experienced by men.

## **CASE 1—Abandoned!**

A young man is helping his girlfriend relocate to college. They are driving through Montana, en route from the Midwest to Washington State. An argument breaks out during the trip. The conflict remains unresolved as they approach Hardin and exit the Interstate to refuel. They stop at a convenience store/gas station just off Exit 495. The young man gets out and pumps the gasoline, then enters the business to use the restroom. Once he is inside, the girl speeds off in the car without paying for the gasoline. When he comes out of the restroom, everything familiar—his girlfriend, their car and his personal belongings—have vanished.

The young man explains the situation, and the clerks sympathize, but they still want payment for the gasoline. This is resolved in a few minutes when his traveling companion phones from a store on the other side of the overpass and gives her credit card information to pay for the gasoline. The transaction is approved and she does not return, leaving the young man stranded with just the clothes on his back.

## **CASE 2—Where am I going to live when I get home?**

A 22-year-old man and his wife are operating a farm. The employment provides the couple and their two-year old son with housing and utilities. Unsatisfied with this arrangement, the wife encourages him to take a second job. At her urging, he begins work with a company that requires travel and short-term stays at various sites across the nation. While working in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, he accompanies co-workers on a night out, as the designated driver. They enter a bar and after some time, he is pressured into one dance with a young woman from the group. He and his traveling companions return without incident to their motel room. Feeling guilty, he phones home and tells his wife. Her reaction is to tell him not to come home. She proceeds to file for divorce and moves in with her parents, in another state.

Upon his return, he finds temporary shelter with his dad and stepmother, but the situation is uncomfortable, and he decides to attend truck-driving school in another state. A shuttle transports him to and from classes. He successfully completes truck-driving school, but two days before taking the final exam, his wife phones to tell him that their divorce has been finalized. Shaking off the devastation, he successfully completes the driving exam and is awarded a CDL. His mother and stepfather arrive from Big Horn County and drive him home. He returns to truck-driving school within the week, prepared to go over-the-road with a mentor, but, an unpaid traffic ticket in another state materializes and his CDL is confiscated. The county where the ticket was issued doesn't process electronic payments, so, he will have to wait. Without a driver's license, he can't get a job. When his stepmother kicks him out, he finds himself homeless.

## **CASE 3—Smacked with a semi-trailer, skillet and racism!**

A middle-aged man is sitting on a guardrail on an overpass when a semi-truck making a turn onto an Interstate strikes him. Hospitalized, he survives and a steel plate is placed inside his head. Returning home

to Big Horn County, he moves in with a girlfriend. The woman suffers from Bipolar Disorder and their relationship is tumultuous. She wrecks his car. He numbers the times she has kicked him out and counts 57. The last time is the worst. He was sitting on the couch watching TV when he heard pots and pans banging behind him, but thought nothing of it until, without warning, she hit him over the head with a cast-iron skillet. Afterward, he was arrested for DUI, then hospitalized with pneumonia. After release, he spent three nights sleeping in his car, which won't start, in sub-zero weather, at an abandoned rental house. His request for a jump-start to get the vehicle moving is turned down by his nephews and others. On Sunday morning, he attends a local church service and asks for help. A member of the pastoral staff agrees to assist, but their jump-start operations are halted by an angry landlord, muttering racial expletives, who orders the jump-start vehicle off the property.

Long-term answers may not be immediately apparent, but in each scenario, crisis intervention and alternative resources to help the victims cope were needed. The victimization of women through domestic and sexual violence has long been recognized, but according to Montana Board of Crime Control PDQ statistics for 2007, there were 2,640 documented, primary male victims and 1,861 secondary male victims of domestic and sexual violence. They were all ages, and all races. It is also safe to assume, given Montana's frontier culture, that all of them were highly stigmatized and marginalized, and even more unlikely than their female counterparts to report the abuse.

The good news is there are organizations within our community, to deal with these challenges. The following agencies may be able to provide resources and support for Victims of Domestic Violence, who have been displaced.

- Crow Domestic Violence Task Force: 406.638.2490
- Human Resources Development Council (Hardin): 406.665.1895
- Office of Public Assistance (Hardin): 406.665.8700

—Mark Humphrey is the DUI Task Force Coordinator for Big Horn County. He can be reached at [mhumphrey@co.bighorn.mt.us](mailto:mhumphrey@co.bighorn.mt.us).

# A Partnership for Change

—Deb Matteucci

**N**ationally, about 16 percent of prison inmates experience the symptoms of serious mental illness and more than 75 percent of the offenders with mental illness have a co-occurring substance use disorder. For many years, leaders in Montana have recognized that this challenge exists within our state, and that the Department of Corrections and the Department of Public Health and Human Services often serve a shared client base. They set out to make a change.

In July 2006, the state's first Behavioral Health Program Facilitator was hired to serve as a liaison between these systems. This new position was created to ensure lasting, systemic change in criminal justice and mental health policy. Initial efforts began with defining the problem. The agencies acknowledged that they lacked consistent, cross-system evidence-based treatment strategies and methods. Failure to connect effectively endangers lives, wastes resources and may threaten public safety and frustrates crime victims, consumers, family members and communities. A clear and consistent treatment approach may serve as a way to divert admissions from correctional or inpatient mental health facilities and to provide appropriate aftercare services upon discharge.

A strategic plan was developed and adopted in December 2006 to guide the departments' collaborative efforts throughout 2007 and 2008. Guiding principles and long term goals define the scope of the collaboration and continue to direct the efforts of the two agencies as they begin planning for the next biennium. Much success has come from the partnership. Through the dedication of the directors and staff within each agency, the support and encouragement of the Governor's Office, and the innovation of policy makers, Montana is now on the leading edge of meaningful coordination between the criminal justice and mental health systems.

Over the past two years, the agencies have entered into Memorandums of Understanding to improve coordination around specific challenges. They include: 1) a protocol that will enable provisions of equitable treatment to felony offenders

regardless of which department has custody, specifically with regard to sentence calculation, victim notification and tracking status through the criminal justice system; 2) a proposed program to serve inmates who require intensive mental health services in secure custody; and 3) a training partnership with the Montana Law Enforcement Academy to bring mental health and Crisis Intervention Team training to peace officers throughout Montana.

The departments started and funded three new programs to serve the target population. The first, launched in October 2006, is the Probation Intervention Project at Montana Chemical Dependency Center. This is an 8-bed program for offenders on probation who need inpatient chemical dependency treatment to avoid revocation to inmate status and secure custody. In the four years prior to implementation of this program, more than 700 probationers were returned to secure custody, which then served as the primary inpatient treatment venue available to offenders. In the first 18 months of the program, more than 100 offenders were referred to the program and were able to maintain their community placement.

Two additional programs serve offenders in community corrections settings: a Mental Health Services Program and a Pharmacy Benefit. Offenders who qualify for these programs have serious mental illness but fall outside the eligibility of other publicly funded mental health programs. The new services include case management, group therapy, assessment, crisis intervention and medication monitoring. The pharmacy benefit assists with the expense of mental health medications whether short term, until they can be enrolled in Medicaid, or throughout the period of community supervision. These programs also include provisions for targeted mental health and chemical dependency training for probation, parole and prerelease staff members.

As we approach 2009, both agencies are looking toward the future. An updated strategic plan is under development and legislative efforts have been coordinated to identify key policy areas in which the agencies can continue to work together to improve the lives, treatment and future for the vulnerable offenders in their care.

## Top 10 Conviction Offenses 2000-2006

### Males

1. Possession of drugs
2. Theft
3. Felony DUI
4. Burglary
5. Sale of drugs
6. Criminal endangerment
7. Issuing a bad check
8. Assault with a weapon
9. Forgery
10. Partner/family member assault

### Females

1. Possession of drugs
2. Theft
3. Issuing a bad check
4. Forgery
5. Sale of drugs
6. Felony DUI
7. Burglary
8. Criminal endangerment
9. Drug offenses other state
10. Deceptive practices.

Source: Department of Corrections 2007 Biennial Report

[www.cor.mt.gov/resources/Reports/2007BiennialReport.pdf](http://www.cor.mt.gov/resources/Reports/2007BiennialReport.pdf)

—Deb Matteucci is the state's first Behavioral Health Program Facilitator. She serves as a liaison between the departments of Corrections and Public Health and Human Services. She can be reached at [DMatteucci@mt.gov](mailto:DMatteucci@mt.gov).

# Looking Forward with Hope: Anna Whiting Sorrell

**G**

overnor Brian Schweitzer has appointed Anna Whiting Sorrell the new Director of the Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS). No stranger to the Department, Ms. Whiting Sorrell has served as the Governor's Policy Advisor on Families since 2005. In the interim since her appointment as Director this November, she has spent much of her time trying to meet as many of the 3,000+ DPHHS employees as possible. She says that she wants the hallmark of her time as Director to be hope for the people of Montana.

"I am very excited about this opportunity," she said in a recent interview. "Hope is alive all over our country and throughout the world right now. The job of this department, by definition, extends that hope to many in Montana who need the services we provide. Given the current economic downturn, this could be a time of great economic suffering for many in our state. It is difficult for many Montanans to ask for help... but a little help can make all the difference between being hungry and cold (whether housed or homeless) and going to bed in a warm home with a full belly." Ms. Whiting Sorrell believes one of her greatest strengths is that she knows how it feels to need a lifeline and to have to ask for help. Her time as the Policy

Advisor on Families has also offered her insights that extend far beyond the DPHHS.

The size and scope of the Department's services excite the new Director. She believes the timing is right to move forward with hope. "From my time with the Governor, I have come to believe that the Schweitzer/Bohlinger Administration is a shining light. Now, in this new capacity, I will be able to help implement some of

the Governor's proactive, big picture solutions. I am looking forward to taking his vision and working with the staff of DPHHS to put it into action."

She's also excited about the opportunity to help ensure that Montanans have access to good, affordable healthcare and she's absolutely passionate about prevention. That much is evident from her extensive résumé. Anna Whiting Sorrell has spent much of her career working for the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, of which she is an enrolled member. Prior to working for the Governor's Office, she worked in Tribal Administration overseeing a number of programs. She also developed and implemented a nationally recognized substance abuse prevention and treatment program for the Tribes.

Ms. Whiting Sorrell graduated from the University of Montana with a B.A. in Political Science and Education, and a Masters of Public Administration. She and her husband, Gene, make their home on the Flathead Reservation in Ronan with their daughter Katy. Gene's older daughter,

Gena, and husband Victor live in Missoula, and son Eugene serves in the U.S. Air Force, and is currently stationed in England with his wife and four children.

"If there is one thing I want to stay focused on as we move forward in this Department, it is that we *are* the hope for many people," says Ms. Whiting Sorrell.

"There is no other department within

state government that has the capacity this one does to make a real difference for individuals and for families. DPHHS is the place many turn to during times of crisis. Our focus is—and must continue to be—on the people who need these services, who need this department."



Anna Whiting Sorrell

## Left Behind

*A November 2008 report reveals that there are 31,000 uninsured children in Montana, which equates to more than one out of eight children (13.7 percent).*

*The report by Families USA, a national organization for health care consumers, was based on new Census Bureau data, and reflected the three-year period between 2005-2007. Left Behind: Montana's Uninsured Children spotlighted the following facts:*

— *Montana is eighth nationally for the percentage of children in the state without health insurance.*

— *91.9% of uninsured children in Montana come from families where at least one parent works, and 71% live in households where at least one family member works full-time, year-round.*

— *60.6% of Montana's uninsured children come from low-income families (families with incomes below twice the poverty level, or \$35,200 for a family of three in 2008) who are likely eligible for Medicaid or CHIP.*

— *In 2007, more than 20,100 children in Montana received their health coverage through CHIP.*

*For more information, visit:  
[www.familiesusa.org/resources/publications/](http://www.familiesusa.org/resources/publications/)*

# Strengthening Montana

—Governor Brian Schweitzer

**T**o many people, prison—with its bars and fences—is the face of corrections, but corrections in Montana is far more than that. Throughout my administration, Montana's community corrections programs have evolved to balance public safety with addressing the underlying problems of offenders.

When I took office, I recognized the need to take a fresh look at corrections if we hoped to get different results. The corrections system has added innovative programs that have managed to do more than control prison populations. In 2007, Montana led the nation by reducing *the number of inmates by almost 5 percent*.

That's not all. Montana has seen a two-year decline in the rate offenders are entering or returning to correctional institutions and has become recognized nationally as a trail-blazer in the field for our *"progressive attitude towards addressing issues of treatment and rehabilitation."*

Our programs and services are meant to offer the best chance of helping offenders become productive, law-abiding citizens. That is no small charge. In total, Montana's corrections system manages about 13,000 offenders. Since I took office in January 2005, community corrections has become responsible for managing 80 percent of those offenders. This provides safe, effective and cost-efficient alternatives to prison while providing the services needed to meet the needs of offenders.

In the past four years, Montana developed a pair of methamphetamine treatment programs. We believe they are the first of their kind in the nation. They were designed specifically to fight the threats posed by this addictive drug. Montana also launched a new program to divert offenders who have violated the conditions on their placement in communities. Instead of going back to prison, three-fourths of those sent to the diversions program return to the community after counseling.

Bozeman recently joined the list of communities with prerelease centers. A seventh center in the Kalispell area is in the works. The state worked with a

non-profit Montana company to open a unique women's correctional facility in Billings, which offers a prerelease center, chemical dependency treatment program, assessment and sanction center under one roof. We are also in the process of developing a sex offender treatment facility to expand and improve treatment for this population.

Youth corrections programs have become more effective in helping juveniles return to their communities, meaning that populations at the state's youth correctional facilities have been consistently low. The U.S. Justice Department has also recognized some Montana programs that serve juvenile Native American offenders as national models.



***The corrections system has added almost three dozen probation and parole officers to deal with the population of probationers and parolees, which has grown by 1.5 cases a day for the past two years. This supervision costs just \$4.63 a day, and is a great way to manage two out of every three offenders. About 9,000 men and women have been assisted in finding housing, jobs, drug addiction treatment and mental health services through this strategy.***

These programs recognize that correctional services can promote public safety, save taxpayer dollars, honor the innocent victims of crime—while saving the lives of those who otherwise could be lost to addition, alcoholism and illegal behavior. It's all about strengthening Montana.

The opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of the Prevention Resource Center and the Addictive and Mental Disorders Division of the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services.

The Prevention Resource Center and the Addictive and Mental Disorders Division of the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services attempt to provide reasonable accommodations for any known disability that may interfere with a person participating in this service. Alternative accessible formats of this document will be provided upon request. For more information, call AMDD at (406) 444-3964 or the Prevention Resource Center at (406) 444-3484.

# The Last Word

—Joan Cassidy, Chemical Dependency Bureau

**T**

his issue of the *Prevention Connection* focuses on issues around juvenile justice. There's a good reason for choosing this topic: there is a strong link between substance abuse, co-occurring disorders and intersection with the criminal justice and corrections systems. As noted in Deb Matteucci's article in this issue (page 21), the departments of Public Health and Human Services and Corrections have been working closely together in support of a shared population of clients. This approach is working: targeted mental health services and chemical dependency treatment provided in the right dose, at the right time, to the right offenders reduces recidivism, improves accountability and helps people move on with their lives.

At some levels, it is even more important to understand the science- and evidence-based research that provides us with information about how we can avoid building adult offenders. The research is clear. Using a validated risk assessment tool that

measures an offender's risk level is an important first step, and can be used to differentiate between high- and low-risk offenders. High-risk juvenile offenders are typically considered to be those who were first arrested at age 15 or younger and who have at least three out of four high-risk characteristics: academic failure, school suspensions and truancy; lack of family stability and supervision, including single-parent households, poor parenting skills, parents or siblings in the criminal justice system or domestic violence; mental health or substance abuse problems; and pre-delinquent behaviors, including running away, gang affiliation, stealing and disruptive behavior.

The research tells us that high- and low-risk juvenile offenders should never be placed in the same program. Sentencing low-risk offenders to highly restrictive programs where they come into daily contact with their high-risk peers increases recidivism and adverse outcomes for low-risk offenders. Part of the reason lies in taking low-risk youth from the environments that offered the protective factors that made

them low-risk in the first place, while substituting a new, often slightly older, peer group that can teach them criminal thinking patterns and criminogenic behaviors. In these environments, low-risk youth become susceptible to negative peer influence, and may go on to become more serious offenders themselves.

As is clear from many of the articles in this issue, strong pro-social relationships within the community, support for the family, mentoring and wraparound services that target the child and the family work well for low-risk offenders. Trusting relationships with well-grounded adults are key. Effective programs specifically target risk factors by addressing the issues correlated with high-risk behaviors.

One of the many definitions of justice equates it with righteousness and equitability. In a sense, prevention helps level the playing field for our youth. The science behind prevention becomes clearer with every new layer of research. The links among risk factors and the strengths provided by protective factors become clearer as well. What could promote equitability among our youth better than ensuring that we adhere to what we know will help them move into healthy, productive adulthood?

**CSAP** Center for  
Substance Abuse  
Prevention  
Substance Abuse and Mental  
Health Services Administration

A joint publication of the *Prevention Resource Center*  
and the *Addictive and Mental Disorders Division*

**MONTANA**  
Department of Public Health & Human Services

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